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EDWIN and ELEANOR

MAR 16 1899



A Pastoral of Pioneer Life



Edwin and Eleanor



*A Pastoral
of
Pioneer Life*



By ✓
A. C. Houghton

A. D. MDCCCXCIX.

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COLUMBUS, OHIO

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Mar. 2. 99.

Affectionately inscribed
to my
Father and Mother
Edwin and Eleanor Houghton
on the
Sixtieth Anniversary
of their
Wedding Day

*This edition is privately printed and is limited
to three hundred copies, each of which is num-
bered and signed, this being number - 2 - ,*

A. C. Soughton

Edwin and Eleanor

I



T the rustic hand loom in the pioneer's cabin,
Fair Eleanor sat weaving. The bright winter
sun-ray

That hasted thro branches of trees and the narrow-paned
Window, contentedly rested its course from
The sky, while it tinted the glow on her cheek,
And the gold in her hair, and rejoiced with her fingers
That flew in delight o'er the loom with the swift going
Shuttles and web-beating heddles. The ray and
The fingers sped merrily on, as together
They plotted and planned in their thoughts, o'er the soft
Woolen cloth on the loom that was weaving from fleecy
Brown thread she had spun on her low treddle wheel,
While her own thoughts were dreamily, busily, weaving
A web of a different texture and hue, on
That old-fashioned loom, not alone found adorning
The corners of cabins, but ever illuming

The maidenly heart the world over. And thus thro
The day the glad weaving went on, the muffled
Rebound of the loom, and the low silver song of
Her voice, keeping measure and cadence in musical
Strain, till the light-hearted sun-ray had fled
To the sky, and the fingers were weary with weaying.
The warm yellow glow from the fire-place was lighting
The cabin's low room, as she took from the loom
The fair fabric her fingers and fancy had made
In the sun-light, and held it aloft to behold
And admire. And her wonder was deep and delightfully
Strange as she saw, in the maze of the web that was
Woven, a bright gleaming thread that was golden.
What shuttle had borne it, or how it was beaten
Thro warp and in woof, was a mystery deep which
Her thought or her dreams could not solve; neither yet
Did she care, all content to behold and to know
It was there and believe in her heart it was wrought
By the hand of the Master, in sign of his seal
On the love that was weaving its web in the loom
Of her life.



II



THRO the far ancient forest where still was
The haunt and the wandering abode of great
nature's

Wild children, where curling blue smoke from the pioneer's
Home marked the wide scattered outposts of man,
All alone journeyed Edwin. He threaded his way
Thro the intricate maze of the gray beechen wood,
With an instinct that needed no guide. The long winter
Was folding its mantle away, and the hungry
Red deer, browsing buds from low branches, turned large
Startled eyes on the swift going figure that heeded
Her not. With a heart that was bounding and step
That was buoyantly eager, he sped on his way
Over miles that seemed nothing. For glad was the sunlight
That filled full the forest, and glad was the southwind
That played through the branches and wakened to life
The young buds of the spring; but the gladness of Edwin
Was warmer than southwind, was brighter than sunshine;
It filled full his heart as he strode thro the forest
With glory that gilded the sun-light above;

It wakened to life in the depths of his soul,
Buds of promise more dear and divine than was born
Of the southwind and sun. And thus onward he journeyed,
Athletic and tall, as erect as the beech tree
That towered above him, and strong in the might
Of his conscious possession of power that laughed
At the struggle of felling the forest and clearing
The field. And although 'twas alone thro the wildwood
He journeyed, he felt not alone, but companioned
With angels of love and rejoicing, as onward
He went to be wed unto Eleanor the fair.



III



HE keen ax of the woodman rang out thro the
forest,

The echo repeating the story of doom
To its monarchs and glory. 'Twas now it was breaking
'The shadows of ages, and opening the way
Of the sun to the field and its fruitage; and now
It was felling the beech and the maple, and cutting
Their trunks into lengths for a cabin—the pioneer's
Castle of logs. And there Edwin was waging
His battle, undaunted and strong; for with might
And his bride on his side, and a home as reward
For his triumph, the darkness of shadow, and myriad
Of trees, were as nothing against him. And there
He was building his cabin: still bearing the bark
As it grew on the tree in the forest, round log
Was lifted on log and was piled to the eaves
And the gables, and covered with shakes riven out
From the heart of the oak, laid in rows on the rafters.
The chimney was laid up with cross-sticks and plastered
With clay from the wayside. The great open fire-place

Filled half of the end of the cabin, and made ample
Room for the backlog and forelog. The heavy
Iron crane, with its treasures of kettles, swung out from
The jamb; while the broad battened doors, hung on stout
Wooden hinges were opened with string-lifted latches.
The light of the sun found its way thro the windows
Of tiny glass panes, and adorned as a rug of
Bright color, the smooth wooden floor. And the cupboards
And cases, with panels and shelves, that were framed
By his hand and were set in the wall for the books
And the dishes, were mem'ries of comfort and culture
That came from the far distant home of his boyhood.
And there stood his cabin, in rustic completeness,
Surrounded by maples that clustered about it,
As though to protect, and to keep it, a ward of
The forest. With proud beating heart, and an eagerness
Born of devotion, he brought to the cabin's
Fair threshold sweet Eleanor his bride; and the grace
Of a home, as a bright transformation, illumined
That cabin with light all divine. And there,
At the threshold of life in the dark forest shadow,
They lingered together and built, in the glow

Of the light from their hearth, and the fervor that burned
In their bosoms, their altar of worship to God.
With glad hands and full heart she o'er spread to adorn it,
The golden thread fabric that came from her loom,
While he laid on the altar the Book of their faith
With their names written full on its white title-page
And the days of their wedding and birth. In contrition
They knelt by their altar erected, and offered
Their lives and affections upon it, invoked
The Great Father to dwell with his children.

And thus

Did they build, with rejoicing and courage, a home
In the midst of the ancient dark forest; and brave
In the love which they bore to each other, and true
To their faith in the God of their altar, and glad
In the strength which makes living delightful, they took up
The burdens that come in the pioneer's life.
The great sun in the heaven looked down thro the clearing,
And blessed the rich earth with his life-giving power;
Gay birds of the wild-wood a welcome song made,
To the nest builders young who had come to the little
Log cabin, far out in the gray beechen forest.

IV



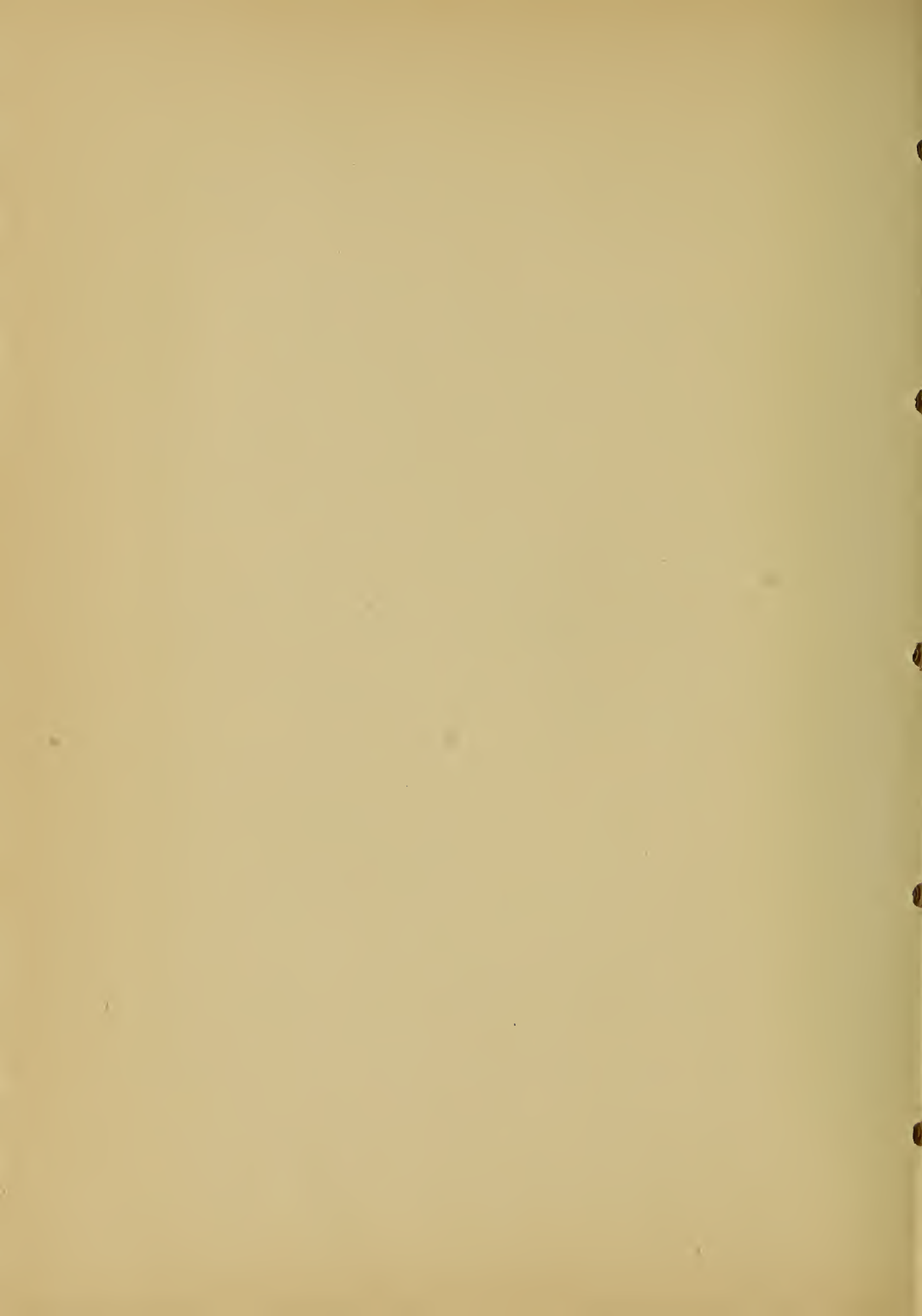
ON a day the glad earth, ever nurtured in shadow
And moisture, unfolding a power, unconscious,
That comes in seclusion, rejoiced in the gift
Of the light from the sun ; it awakened new purpose
Within her full bosom, awakened the instinct
Of warm mother-hood. And soon forth from the earth
To rejoice their creator, enwrapt in the sunlight
And wet with the dew, came to birth the sweet flowers,
And fair blades of corn; and the fragrant new harvest
Was golden.

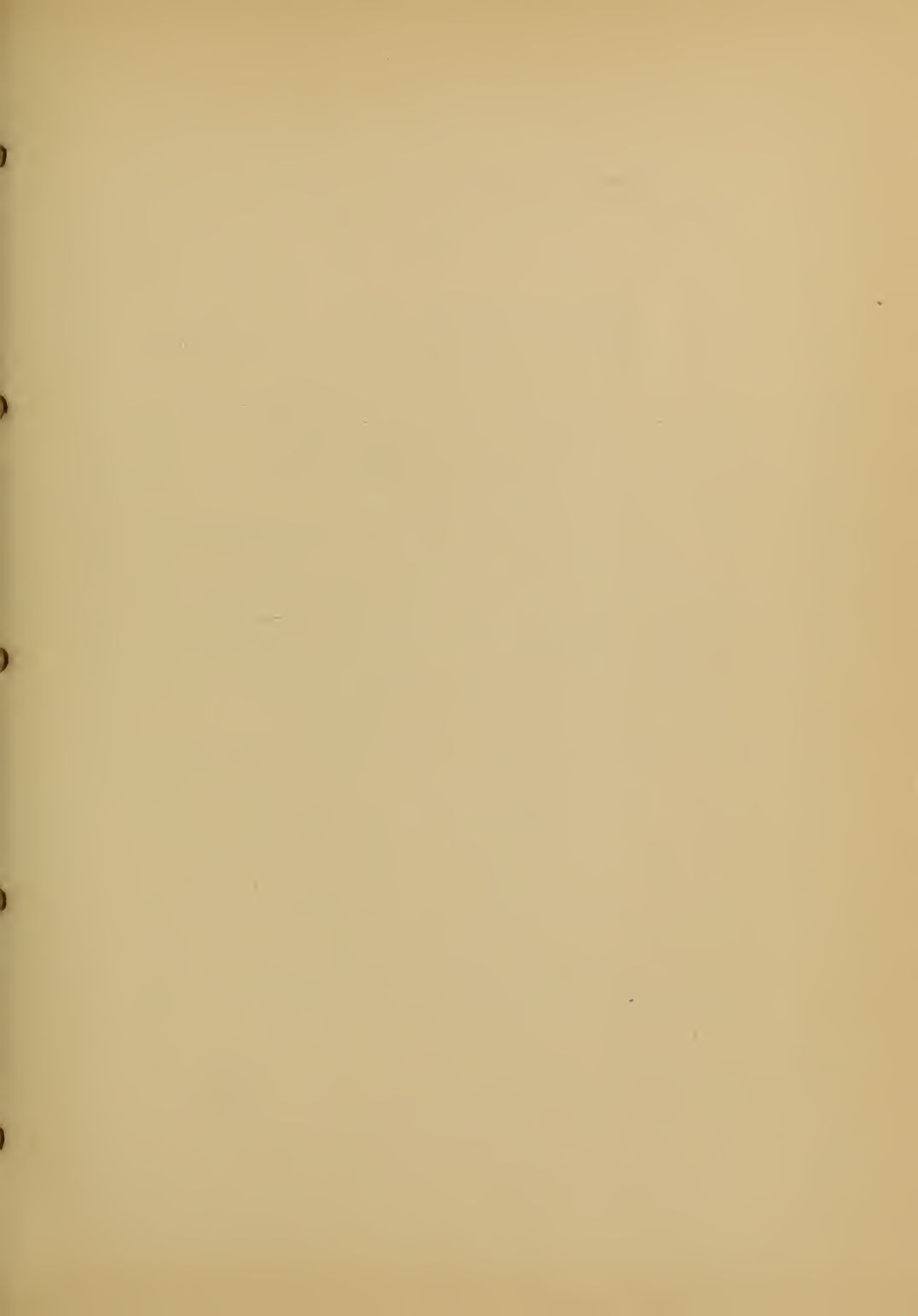
A cradle was placed in the heart of
The pioneer's cabin, set close by the altar,
A cradle of walnut-wood, made by the skilled hand
Of Edwin; and Eleanor fair, with the tenderest
Care, in the cradle-bed laid their love's offspring.
O, sweet on earth's breast were the wild flow'rs that grew!
Ever rich in the field was the bright yellow corn!
But far richer than corn in the ripe golden field,
Ever sweeter than flow'rs, were the prattle and play

Of the children who romped thro the cabin and sang with
The birds in the wildwood.

Oft Eleanor would watch
As they played by the great open fire-place, and shade
Her glad eyes with her hand to behold and admire;
And her wonder grew deep and delightfully strange,
As she saw in the features and forms of her children,
In-woven thro all, the bright glow of a light
Which she knew came from heaven, and full of the promise
Of good and fruition divine. And deep in
Her heart as the days came and went, she besought
The Great Master that all thro the lives of her children,
Wrought into the web as it grew on the loom of
Life's weaving, might ever appear that mysterious
Thread which is golden !







V



YEARS came, and they went,

Ah, so swift did they go! And the story of
changes

That came in their lives as the years hurried by,
Is the story that over and over, with shifting of
Scene, is retold in the lives of us all.

The wild forest had gone at the blow of the woodman,
And broad fertile fields spread their face to the sun
For his blessing. The cabin of logs, with its hallowed
Shrines, gave its place to the low windowed cottage
Embowered in vines. And the village that grew
By the river, uplifting its spires o'er the hill,
Bro't the great throbbing world with its life to their thresh-
hold.

The heavens above had grown wider; the duty
To neighbor and country grown broader; and burdens
All new to their shoulders were borne with true courage
And honor.

Life's joys that were tasted, had gone,
As the day goes to darkness, until a new dawn

Shall arise; yet their memories bright, in the heart
Deeply stored, lingered long tow'rd the oncoming twilight.
The near coming world, with its hurrying life,
In its train bro't fair idols of worship, in liveried
Vestments of fashion and power, which wakened
Their fancy and longing; and yet as they sought them,
In half doubting service, had crumbled away,
And had left them but ashes. The children whose prattle
And singing, had startled sweet echoes in fairy-land
Wood, o'er whose dimples and frolic they doted
And tarried, grew on to the serious days,
Where the ways have a parting, and hearts a re-mating.
Entwined in their lives, was earth's bitter-sweet vine,
With its gladness and sadness, and touching their souls
With its mellowing, ripening power.

But bitterer
Still grew the red cup of trial, that pressed to their
Lips to be drained; and the wan troubled cheeks,
And the tearless hot eyes, told their story of struggle
And deep sacred fear, as the angry dark shadow
Of war for the life of a nation in peril,
Swept over the land and their homes; and the far reaching
Call for the offering of life's richest gift to be

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Laid on the altar of country, rang out as the
Clarion voice of the Angel of Duty !

The currents of life-blood stood still in their hearts,
As they yearned to withhold, from the terror of battle,
And fever of camp, the fair sons of their soul—and yet
would not;

For there burned in their bosoms the fire of devotion
And courage for country, that lighted the way of
Their fathers in dark gloomy conflict for home and
The right of a land to be free. And thro long
Anxious days meas'ring on into years, they still prayed
For their nation and arms, ever waited and watched
The return of their young soldier boy from the war—
And he came not !

And now the swift course of the years
Seemed a dream in their flight, as their hearts caught the
strains

From a far-away land, where the hopes they had cherished
Might come once again. The green hill and the meadow,
And stream going by them, still were dear as the scene
Of their life's loving toil; but it told of the days,
Now long since passed away, when the vigor of youth,
And the joy of endeavor, had filled the years full

With delight. The strong step that was buoyant, and voice
That commanded, grew gentle and slow; and the form
That was lofty, which conquered the forest, was bent
With the weight of the years, and life's burden of cares;
Yet the hearts that still beat in their bosoms, were saintly
And warm as the heart of a child.

One by one

Old companions in toil and privation, their neighbors
In sorrow and need, dropped away to their rest in
The church-yard; and narrow and lone in the wide
Busy world, grew their pathway. The shadows were long
By the low cottage door, and the wind thro the branches
Moaned softly in minors.

And then in the ripeness

Of years, after tears with their burning and toil with
Its bending, and after the fever and passion
Of life, like a great benediction from heaven,
Came peace—like the river that floweth, out-winding
Its way from the deep shadowed forest, and seeking
Its home in the sea. Calm and gentle it goeth,
Embraced by its banks low and green which it blesses,
It passeth the light tower that signals the ships in
The offing. The great sun in heaven is sinking

To rest. The broad river has caught his last ray on
Its quivering tide; and far out to the foam-crested
Breakers, its course is a thread that is golden
With light ; and the river and sun in the ocean
Go out mid a glory our eyes may not see!



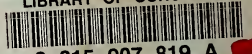
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